From the New York "Evening Post," March 17, 1902.

We print on another page an open letter from Herbert Welsh to Secretary Root upon the use of torture by the United States troops in the Philippines, which we commend to the attention of our readers. Mr. Welsh has but one object in view—the clearing of the good name of our soldiers, or, if this cannot be done, the rigorous punishment of those guilty of acts which Mr. Root admits are contrary to the articles of war. It seems to us that the War Department is entirely too ready to dismiss many of the occurrences with a mere reprimand, on the ground that such things are inevitable in war. Mr. Welsh cites the case of Lieut. Hagedorn, who tortured three Filipinos by giving them only salt fish and no water to drink for forty-eight hours. This "mistake of judgment" was excused by his commanding officer, so that the Lieutenant got off scot free. But not for long, since almost as Mr. Welsh was writing his letter, this flower of American chivalry was put under arrest and imprisoned in Manila for embezzling the funds of his regiment. Mr. Welsh has yet to hear of any attempt to start an official inquiry into the acts of Major O'Connell, also cited by him. When the War Department did get hold of a clear case, the shooting of a Filipino in the back by Lieut. Preston Brown, Second Infantry, as the Filipino was walking away, it commuted Brown's sentence from dismissal and imprisonment to a reduction in rank which will only delay his impending promotion to captain for a matter of eight months or so. The War Department owes it to the nation to explain this leniency, and to deny or affirm the truth of Gen. Hughes's and Stephen Bonsal's testimony as to the uncivilized nature of the warfare in the island of Samar. If they must affirm it, the people should know why "Old Glory" must look down upon such dark and savage deeds. Meanwhile, Mr. Welsh does well in pressing home the charge, for it is indispensable that the country should know the facts, and form its judgment on them, wherever the truth lies.

TORTURE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

An Open Letter from Herbert Welsh to Secretary Root—Cumulative Testimony Upon Which the Former Bases a Belief that Cruelties Have Been Practised Upon the Natives.

PHILADELPHIA, March 17th.—The following open letter, from Herbert Welsh to Secretary of War Root, bearing to-day's date, is made public here:

"SIR: In your letter of February 17th to the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Philippines, you

treat of charges of cruelty and uncivilized methods of warfare alleged to have been committed under our flag in these islands. In the letter of General Funston bearing on this subject, which you submit as exhibit (a), together with other kindred reports, printed in Senate document 205, 'City and State' is mentioned as the source of one of these charges. I therefore feel justified in openly addressing you as the official head of the War Department on a question which I believe to be of the utmost public concern, a question which directly affects the honor and the welfare of the country, and, indirectly, but none the less vitally, the progress of true civilization.

"I shall first try to state fairly what I conceive to be your position in matters of fact and of policy, and then give in rejoinder my own views on the matter at issue as they have been expressed in the journal referred to by General Funston. I understand your letter to be a distinct, unqualified denial of the charge, which is, in brief, that torture has been used under our flag in the Philippines for the accomplishment of a military purpose. You deny the use of any cruel or uncivilized methods of warfare, in the conflict waged to subdue Filipino opposition to our sovereignty, more than might be expected to occur in any war, or than might be expected to result in this war, where you admit that the cruelties of a semi-barbarous enemy have occasionally provoked our soldiers to acts of unauthorized revenge. This is, I think, a fair interpretation of your position and of what you would have the country believe to be true. You say that the orders governing our soldiers in the Philippines are the same as those promulgated by President Lincoln to govern our armies in the Civil War, and that these rules, which have governed our regular and volunteer armies ever since, are 'the practical and effective guide and rule of conduct to which every officer understands that he must conform.' You then call attention, among other things, to rule 16, which prohibits 'maiming or wounding except in fight' and 'torture to extort confession.' You say further that the war on the part of the Filipinos has been conducted with the barbarous cruelty common among uncivilized races, and with 'general disregard of the rules of civilized warfare.' Further you say that this war has been conducted on our part with 'scrupulous regard for the rules of civilized warfare and with careful and genuine consideration for the prisoner, and with humanity never surpassed, if ever equaled in any conflict, worthy only of praise and reflecting credit on the American people.'

"Almost precisely the opposite of this I believe to be the truth. I believe it upon evidences which, though moral rather than as yet legal, are so varied and so persistent that their cumulative testimony would produce on a dispassionate mind subjected to them a settled conviction of their essential truth. These evidences, some of which I will present, shut us up, as I claim, to one of two conclusions—either that the charge which I make is true; that torture has been used by us to extort confessions at least from April 25, 1900, to August 18, 1901, to an extent sufficient to justify the term of 'policy' applied to the 'water-cure' torture by one of our officers of

high rank serving in the Philippines; or that a conspiracy exists to defame our good name, into which have entered not only common soldiers and subalterns, but officers of high rank and repute, American school-teachers, and American censored newspapers published in Manila—for all these are to-day included in the list of those whose moral evidence supports my contention. This latter supposition seems to me incredible, but as I wrote the President on this subject December 27th, it is the only alternative left open to him who denies the substantial truth of the charge. If your statements on the subject are true, how could this term 'policy' be used by a man of high character and position, and situated so as to know well what was going on and to be to some degree an eye-witness of the horrible results of this degrading and monstrous practice? How could he write a brother officer as follows:

"'A company of Macabebes enter a town or barrio, catch some man—it matters not whom—ask him if he knows where there are any guns, and upon receiving a negative answer, five or six of them throw him down, one holds his head, while others have hold of an arm or a leg. They then proceed to give him the "water-torture," which is the distention of the internal organs with water. After they are distended, a cord is sometimes placed around the body and the water expelled. From what I have heard, it appears to be generally applied, and its use is not confined to our section. Although it results in the finding of a number of guns, it does us an infinite amount of harm. *Nor are the Macabebes the only ones who use this method of obtaining information.* [Italics mine.] Personally, I have never seen this torture inflicted, nor have I ever knowingly allowed it; but I have seen a victim a few minutes afterward, with his mouth bleeding where it had been cut by a bayonet used to hold the mouth open, and his face bruised where he had been struck by the Macabebes. Add to this the expression of his face and his evident weakness from the torture, and you have a picture which once seen will not be forgotten. I am not chicken-hearted, but this policy hurts us. Summary executions are, and will be, necessary in a troubled country, and I have no objection to seeing that they are carried out; but I am not used to torture. The Spaniards used the torture of water, throughout the islands, as a means of obtaining information, but they used it sparingly, and only when it appeared evident that the victim was culpable. Americans seldom do things by halves. We come here and announce our intention of freeing the people from three or four hundred years of oppression, and say "we are strong, and powerful, and grand." Then to resort to inquisitorial methods, and use them without discrimination, is unworthy of us and will recoil on us as a nation.'

"The foregoing is the sober testimony of an honorable gentleman, a brave and experienced soldier, whose mind and heart both revolt against a hideous and inhuman practice which he sees followed, *not by Macabebes only*, but evidently by Americans as well; not in sudden hot revenge for cruelties of an enemy, but in cold-blooded pursuit of a military end. For obvious reasons, this witness's name cannot at present be given, but his testimony is none the less convincing on that account. It is vouched for, also, by Mr. George Kennan, the Siberian traveler and investigator of established reputation. This was published a year ago in the 'Outlook,' a paper which has cordially supported the existing Philippine policy—nor has any one ever dared, to my knowledge, to challenge or disprove this testimony. It is not the gossip of an irresponsible private soldier, but

the calm, discriminating protest of a high officer. If your statements are correct on this point, what explanation do you give of the report published in the Manila 'Times' of August 18, 1901, which recounts operations in Samar, and from which I quote as follows:

"'Finally, on June 21st, Lieutenant Downes and one man were killed and three wounded near Pambahan, in a fight from ambush which evidently had been prepared pursuant to information sent out from Guiuan as to Lieutenant Downes's movements. Several prominent Filipinos gave some valuable information as to the instigators of this spy system, and as they had before given information which proved true, the commanding officer thought best to act upon this information. Major John J. O'Connell, First Infantry, of Gussie expedition fame, who arrived on the scene about this time as commanding officer, said that a good *shaking* up all around would be good; that "he wanted no traitors around." Therefore, all the suspected were given a "dose" of the "water cure," which proved effectual in bringing to light the guilty. These were locked up in prison. The prime-mover in the affair was discovered to be the Presidente of the Pueblo San Esteban Austria.'

"The foregoing is an excellent illustration of what seems to me the real truth. We have used this torture not to be cruel, or for revenge, but because we have found it a convenient way to get important information. Indeed, Governor Taft has admitted in substance what you deny, and I claim, 'water torture' and 'unnecessary killings,' but he speaks of them as 'strictly forbidden.' How strictly? To a degree that those indulging in them are punished, whether they be our own officers or our savage Macabebe allies, the use of which opens us to the rebuke Lord Chatham gave Great Britain when she employed similar means against us in the Revolutionary War? Hardly so, it would seem—as I wrote Assistant Adjutant-General Andrews inquiring whether Major O'Connell had been court-martialled for his alleged offense. I got no answer to this question. I received a courteous letter calling my attention to your communications on the general subject to the Senate. In this I find no record of inquiry into this case, but I do find the full report of the case of Lieutenant Hagedorn, who under somewhat similar circumstances used what must have been in the tropics an excruciating torture. Three Filipinos, from whom he wished to extort information, were put in the stocks, fed on *salt fish*, and deprived of water for forty-eight hours. The Lieutenant reports with evident pride to his superior officer that 'this diet had excellent results,' for it forced the victims to give the desired information. Was this officer punished for his 'use of torture to extort confession' (forbidden by the rules, and which you say are 'the practical and effective guide' under which our army operates in the Philippines)? His superior officer, Colonel Hood, as your report shows, commended him for 'energetic' and 'valuable service in the pacification of this district,' stated that he had acted in 'the best interests of the service, even if mistakenly,' and recommended that no further action be taken in the case.

[This "energetic" officer, according to press dispatches, has just been imprisoned in Manila for embezzlement—doubtless merely a "mistaken" theft.—Ed. "Evening Post."]

"Now my inference is (and I ask you and the public if it is not a fair one) that if an officer who used the salt-fish and no-water torture is not punished, but generally commended, while another, whose use of the water-torture is openly published by a censored newspaper in the city where our own military headquarters exist, is not court-martialled, that 'the constant and effective presence of prohibition, precept, and discipline,' which you assert has been maintained against the use of torture or other cruelties inflicted on the natives, is not such as you have imagined and declared it to be; that it exists on paper, but not in practice. I think that the statement published in the Kansas City 'Journal' of March 10th, from W. H. Clark, a returned soldier of the Eighteenth United States Infantry, gives a fair picture of the truth: 'The water-cure has been administered to thousands of natives in the Philippines—at least in Panay. . . . We did not do it in the spirit of malevolence, . . . but the water-cure is the quickest remedy for non-communicativeness and mendacity which has yet been discovered in the Philppines. It is probably a relic of the Spanish inquisition.' . . . When asked whether the treatment was fatal, this witness said: 'Well, they usually get sick, and some of them never recover from their sickness. Of course, we never torture any Filipinos to death, but the only way to get along with them is to administer the water-cure. I have seen kerosene and cocoanut oil used instead of water, but the effect is the same.' This witness, while he strongly confirms by his testimony my charge, later on praises, as you do, the 'general humanity' of our soldiers. Of course, the question of 'humanity' depends on one's point of view. But what this and so many others describe is inconsistent with 'humanity' as you, I presume, and Americans generally understand the term.

"General Funston brands as an 'atrocious lie' the statement made on the authority of a soldier in his command, by a Philippine correspondent of the South Carolina 'The State,' to the effect that this soldier had assisted at 160 applications of this water-cure torture, all but 26 of which had resulted fatally. This correspondent speaks of this torture as a 'favorite' one with us for extracting information. This coincides with Clark's testimony and others. Unless a very large number of our people have falsified, whose position and past reputation would forbid that supposition, we certainly have shown ourselves extremely fond of it. But who is the correspondent who quoted the soldier in General Funston's command? Is he a responsible person? The editor of 'The State' writes me that he is a Mr. R. D. Epps, a teacher in the Philippines, chosen by the State Superintendent of Education in South Carolina, at the request of the Washington authorities. This man wrote, as the editor of 'The State' points out, 'from the American army standpoint, not from that of Filipinos or Anti-Imperialists,' and he was 'evidently in sympathy with the measures adopted.' He does not vouch for the precise mortality produced on the Filipinos by the use of the water-torture. That may or may not be correct. That

is not the vital point. The testimony falls generally into line with that given by many others.

"Nor is the claim made that General Funston ordered this. It would naturally result from just such orders as have been issued, and just such campaigns as we know have been carried on in Samar by General Smith, and General Bell, in Batangas. General Hughes, in his testimony before the Senate Committee (which is so interesting and important that I wish it might have been given fully to the public), admits that our campaign in Samar each year got 'stiffer,' that we were conducting what could not be called 'civilized warfare.' General Hughes testifies that he had at one time as many as '120 commands in the field.' 'Each commander, under general restrictions, had authority to act for himself'; that new commanders would come into the field, and start in to conduct their work much 'easier' than the old ones; 'they would come into the country with their ideas of *civilized warfare, and were allowed to get their lesson.*' [Italics mine.] Do you dispute the correctness of General Hughes's testimony, given reservedly, and with caution lest he should tell more than was expedient? If not, then your published statement is incorrect, and seriously misleading. Mr. Stephen Bonsal, the returned New York 'Herald' correspondent, throws further light on the dark chapter of our operations in Samar, to add fresh force to General Hughes's testimony. He says in the Boston 'Transcript,' March 10th:

"'During my stay in Samar the only prisoners that were made so far as I know were taken by Waller's command, and I heard this act criticized by the higher officers as a mistake which they believed he would not repeat when he became better acquainted with the conditions in Samar. . . . If on their march Waller and his men shot any natives they met, their action would be fully covered *by the general orders of General Smith.*' [Italics mine.]

"But were the Filipinos as cruel and uncivilized in warfare as your unqualified declarations on the subject warrant us to believe? I think a careful examination of the facts will show that until our attacks on their organized Government broke it down, and compelled disorganized and guerrilla warfare, they generally treated prisoners well. Great praise has been given to Aguinaldo for his humanity in war. Wilcox and Sargent in their trip through Luzon, on Admiral Dewey's behalf, in the autumn of 1898, reported not only general peace and order, but many Spanish prisoners in good conditions. If the Filipinos' treatment of prisoners was originally barbarous, would Admiral Dewey have permitted or compelled the 3000 Spaniards who surrendered at Subig Bay to go into Filipino hands instead of ours? Were not Lieutenant Gilmore and his men well treated by Aguinaldo? Would the *Spanish* Red Cross Society have given Aguinaldo a medal of honor 'for humanity in war,' which was carried to him by an American gentleman last December, as I happen to know, if he had treated prisoners of the Spanish nation cruelly? Or would Aguinaldo have given food to General Funston and his men when he thought they were hungry prisoners

instead of disguised enemies, if his and his people's general practice was one of cruelty to prisoners? Is not this a case where the victor can afford to be, if not generous, in judging a fallen foe, at least accurate and just? Who is responsible for the bad change that has come over Filipino warfare in this respect if not ourselves?

"I ask as I draw to a close of this long and wearisome recital of torture and butchery, at which we would stand aghast were it done by any other nation than our own, do you doubt or will you deny the general truth of the statement recently made in the New York 'Evening Post' by its able and most reliable Washington correspondent, on the authority of a Republican Congressman who visited the Philippines last summer? I quote as follows:

"'But the Filipino is at heart in a state of rebellion against the United States authority, and he always will be. You never heard of any disturbance in northern Luzon, and the secret of its pacification is, in my opinion, the secret of the pacification of the archipelago. They never rebel in northern Luzon because there isn't anybody there to rebel. That country was marched over and cleaned out in a most resolute manner. *The good Lord in heaven only knows the number of Filipinos that were put under ground, for our soldiers took no prisoners; they kept no records; they simply swept the country, and wherever or however they came upon a Filipino they killed him. The women and children were spared, and can now be noticed in disproportionate numbers in that part of the island.* [Italics mine.] . . . But, as I gage American sentiments, there was no real opposition to the course pursued by Funston and others in northern Luzon, and there would not be to a similar course in the rest of the archipelago.'

"It is true the author of this statement, which is but another of the many links on the long chain of moral evidence which proves how different is the condition of our island warfare from what you would lead us to believe, as yet reserves his name. I trust before long he will reveal it; I trust that there may soon come such a quickening of the public conscience over these deeds, useless as they are bloody, Spanish rather than American in their nature, that he and many others like him, who can testify as to the real truth, will come forward, and declare it in the presence of all men, and the country will call them to do so. It is a truth that the American people must know and must ponder. They must ask the persistent question, Is it a good tree which bears such corrupt fruit? And what must be its effect on the character and constitution of the nation that feeds upon it?

"I had sincerely believed that the American soldier, whose good behavior in China shone so brightly in comparison with the dark deeds committed by the troops of some foreign Powers, would have resisted the temptation to fall to the low level of uncivilized warfare. The evidence is convincing, however, that in the Philippines he has not done so. We must all bear the heavy burden of shame brought on us by this fall, but we can best lighten its weight, and hope for a better record in the future, not by denying patent facts, indulging in self-adulation to which we are clearly not entitled, or by trying to distract attention from our own faults by emphasizing the faults of others, but by confessing the plain truth in a manly way. France

was sharply criticized, by those nations which consider Anglo-Saxon civilization the foremost leaders of humane progress, for an alleged attempt in the Dreyfus case to sacrifice exact justice to the reputation of the army. We all saw the specious fallacy that lured men to that attempt, and cried out: Reputation is worthless if the truth and character that should sustain it are gone. The same impartial perspicacity which we of Great Britain and the United States show them when a sister nation was threatened with blindness, should be invoked now for our own benefit when a similar affliction threatens us.

"No one has a greater respect and admiration than I for the many noble men who have served their country as privates or officers in our army. Many of my best friends have been among this number. There are among them many who, knowing of these abuses, would gladly have prevented or stopped them if they could. They were largely powerless on account of their positions. But I do not see how any true American, knowing and loving the institutions of his country as I do, and knowing these sad facts as I believe I know them, can fail to place on record openly and boldly his protest against practices which inflict a great wrong upon humanity and ourselves. Respectfully,

"Herbert Welsh."

Up to the present date no answer of any kind has been received to this communication. H. W.